

Return to Use Initiative

2006 Demonstration Project

Kansas City Structural Steel: Kansas City, Kansas

THE SITE: The 22-acre Kansas City Structural Steel site was home to a smelting and refining company from 1880 until 1901 and a steel fabrication facility from 1907 until 1984. The steel fabrication process produced by-products that contaminated the surface soil and ground water at the site. Heavy metal contaminants were detected in the soil; lead contamination was the primary concern. In 1993, a removal action was carried out to excavate contaminated soil up to four feet below grade and backfill the area with clean fill. Buildings and concrete and asphalt pads were decontaminated, demolished, and disposed of. Some of the excavated soils were placed in a structural embankment in the southeast corner of the site, known as the consolidated fill area. Piles of asbestos-contaminated brick were also removed. BancAmerica Commercial Corporation acquired the property in 1984. In 1995, El Centro Inc., a local non-profit community development organization, acquired the property from BancAmerica and entered into a Prospective Purchaser Agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). At this time, institutional controls were implemented to prevent future exposure to lead contamination at depth in site soils.

THE OPPORTUNITY: Since cleanup, the site has been vacant in an otherwise mixed industrial, commercial, and residential area. Existing infrastructure such as a nearby railroad and four-lane highway makes the site attractive to residential, commercial, and industrial developers. Alternatively, using the site as a recreational green space would also be welcomed by community members. A number of interested developers have pitched ideas for redevelopment, including a wheel manufacturing facility, a golf driving range academy, a steel manufacturer, a counter top manufacturer, and a residential development. El Centro Inc. is actively involved in economic development efforts in the community and would like for the site's reuse to bring in new jobs, increase the tax base, or otherwise enhance the community's economic standing.

THE BARRIERS: All of the developer inquiries thus far have been unsuccessful. The institutional controls restrict how buildings can be constructed at the site. At least a four-foot clean fill layer must remain below the finished grade. Buildings constructed on the site cannot have basements, and crawl spaces cannot be more than two feet below the finished grade. Foundations and support structures can extend below the four-foot barrier, but special rules apply for handling hazardous



Barriers:

Uncertainty about appropriate uses of the property; lack of clear information about the site

Solution:

Preliminary reuse assessment evaluation and information gathering; active ongoing dialogue with site owner and Realtor; provide clear and understandable information through a Ready for Reuse Determination



Before:

Cleaned up steel fabrication facility with a number of unsuccessful redevelopment inquiries

After:

22 acres of available property, assessed for commercial, industrial, and residential reuse potential

materials during construction. These restrictions have deterred potential developers from acquiring the site, since many industrial and commercial buildings require pits or open structures substantially below the finished grade. The consolidated fill area is fenced off and cannot be used for any purpose. EPA and the site owner have also discussed the possibility that information about the site's potential is not reaching appropriate audiences.

THE SOLUTION: EPA proposed a preliminary reuse assessment to determine reasonable and protective future uses, which would help the site owner and potential developers better understand the site's possibilities and limitations. In an effort to bring all stakeholders together on the same page, EPA facilitated discussions among El Centro Inc., local officials, the property Realtor, the EPA site attorney, and the EPA site assessment manager to maintain a productive dialogue about what barriers not necessary for protectiveness can be addressed to support the site's future use. These discussions have also led to the creation of a Ready for Reuse (RfR) Determination in order to provide clear and understandable information about the site and protective future uses.

THE SITE NOW: EPA and local officials are currently working on the RfR Determination, which is expected to be completed and signed in 2007. Armed with clear and accurate information about what uses the site can reasonably support, El Centro Inc. will be in a position to make the site available to potential purchasers and take the first steps towards redevelopment, while ensuring that future site users will be protected. EPA Region 7 will continue to work with El Centro Inc. to overcome any additional barriers that might arise.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT: Tonya Howell, Region 7 Superfund Redevelopment Coordinator, at (913) 551-7589 or howell.tonya@epa.gov.



Left to right: Kansas City Structural Steel site in foreground, railroad and adjacent industrial facilities in background; grass-covered consolidated fill area in foreground; site perimeter fence looking west.